

# eNews: Volume 19, Number 8 (December 2021)

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Director's  
Desk



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Volume 19, Number 8 (December 2021)

## From the Director's Desk

John Howard, M.D. Director, NIOSH

### Advancing Oil and Gas Workplace Safety and Health Through Research and Partnerships

The last few years have been some of the most challenging in recent memory for the oil and gas extraction (OGE) industry. The industry was already in the midst of a major downturn when it was suddenly faced with the need to keep operations running throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Through it all however, the OGE industry has remained committed to keeping the safety and health of their workforce at the forefront.

NIOSH also continues to prioritize the safety and health of OGE workers as we work with partners in industry, government, academia, labor, and others to make improvements in worker safety and health in the OGE industry. On December 14–15, NIOSH will gather virtually with these partners, along with hundreds of other oil and gas safety and health professionals, managers, and workers in Houston, for the [2021 UTA Oil and Gas Conference](#). This is the largest gathering of safety and health professionals in the OGE industry. Attendees will hear from researchers across many disciplines, including several from NIOSH, about research and prevention activities designed to keep the workers in the U.S. oilfields safe and healthy. I am honored to be joining federal colleagues from OSHA and EPA as part of the opening plenary session on Tuesday. NIOSH research that will be featured at this conference is described below.

NIOSH recently completed a national survey of OGE workers that provides new information about this workforce and the safety and health issues they face. Using data from this survey, the first (pending) publication reports that longer commutes, less sleep, and extended work hours were associated with near misses and drowsy driving, as well as falling asleep while driving a vehicle for work.



NIOSH researchers conduct hygiene research on an oil and gas well site. Photo by NIOSH

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NIOSH is also working to identify barriers and incentives to seat belt use among OGE workers in a project entitled "Seat Belt Use Among Drivers: What's Not 'Clicking'." Our researchers will be conducting interviews with workers and focus groups with supervisors and managers asking questions that will address knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and employer policies related to seat belt use. The results of this study will guide the development of materials to increase seat belt use among OGE workers. Another project is looking at how in-vehicle monitoring systems (IVMS) could potentially be used with coaching techniques to prevent risky driving behaviors.

In 2022, NIOSH will embark on a project to prevent noise-induced hearing loss caused by exposures to noise and chemicals in the OGE industry. Finally, NIOSH oil and gas extraction researchers are collaborating with the new [NIOSH Center for Work and Fatigue Research](#) to better understand how much fatigue affects OGE workers. The project aims to identify both personal and workflow barriers to consider when developing and implementing fatigue management policies in the OGE industry and determine if the participating companies have policies in place aimed at reducing fatigue in the workers.

Collaboration with industry partners in drilling, servicing, and operating companies has helped to keep research and prevention activities going. However, there is much more work to do. To continue to advance our occupational safety and health research in the OGE industry, NIOSH needs to expand our partnerships.

Please consider partnering with NIOSH to improve safety and health in this important industry. For more information about this work or to collaborate with NIOSH, email [nioshoilandgas@cdc.gov](mailto:nioshoilandgas@cdc.gov). See the [NIOSH Fatalities in the Oil and Gas webpage](#) to learn more about safety and health issues in OGE.

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## NIOSH eNews is Brought to You By:

John Howard, M.D., Director

## Research Rounds

For the NIOSH 50th Anniversary, please enjoy this limited time series of "NIOSH Now" and "NIOSH Then" where we look back at research efforts inside & outside of NIOSH from the past 50 years.

### NIOSH Now:

#### Jobs With High Risk of COVID-19 Exposure Often Employ Black and Hispanic Workers

Job type can contribute to the disproportionately high risk of COVID-19 exposure among workers of certain racial and ethnic groups, according to a recent study in the [Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities](#). [↗](#)

NIOSH investigators considered three potential exposure risks for COVID-19 at work: exposure to infection in the workplace and less ability to maintain physical distancing or work from home. They used records from the March and April 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) and O\*Net, a publicly available nationwide source of occupational information.

The results showed that Black and Hispanic workers disproportionately faced the highest risk of COVID-19 exposure at work. Relative to their share of the total workforce, Black workers were overrepresented in several job types with high risk of potential exposure:

- Occupational and physical therapy
- Healthcare diagnosis or treatment
- Health technology
- Other healthcare support
- Funeral services

Black workers were also overrepresented in jobs with less ability to maintain physical distancing. In addition to occupational therapy, these jobs included protective services, law enforcement, food preparation and serving, special education, healthcare diagnosis or treatment, health technical specialties, social work, and firefighting and prevention.

Similarly, relative to their share of the total workforce, Hispanic workers were overrepresented in several jobs with less ability to work from home:

- Construction
- Forest conservation and logging
- Vehicle and mobile equipment specialties
- Water transportation
- Material moving
- Building cleaning and pest control
- Plastic, metal, and woodwork
- Food processing
- Installation

These results highlight the importance of prevention measures, especially in high-risk jobs, such as personal protective equipment, training, ample working space, and vaccinations.

More information is available: [COVID-19 Information for the Workplace](#).

## NIOSH Then: Decades Long Program Examines Emerging and Persistent Hazards and Solutions in Construction

Since 1990, NIOSH has funded CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training as a [National Center for Construction Safety and Health Research and Translation](#). CPWR focuses on connecting scientists and interested industry groups to conduct research on construction health and safety hazards. In 1993 CPWR started the “Small Study Program.” It was developed to draw new investigators into construction health and safety research and allow others to quickly test innovative concepts through pilot research projects.

These studies address industry-driven priorities, including [NIOSH strategic goals](#) and the [National Occupational Research Agenda for Construction](#). They focus on developing or changing policy interventions, identifying emerging hazards and creating new approaches for persistent hazards. The studies also focus on developing and testing promising technologies and interventions for construction worker health and safety.

During the 25-plus years of the Small Study Program, CPWR provided an estimated \$3.75 million for 127 projects. This funding resulted in numerous research products and accomplishments with over 60% of small study

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recipients publishing their findings in peer-reviewed journals. Several studies also developed new technologies for persistent hazards in construction such as [falls from heights](#)   and [struck-by incidents](#)  . These projects have increased employers' ability to conduct safety inspections more frequently in hard-to-reach areas—both inside of high-rise buildings and in terms of geographic location of sites—and led to additional funding and construction industry support for continued research. These projects have increased employers' ability to conduct safety inspections more frequently in hard-to-reach areas—both inside of high-rise buildings and in terms of geographic location of sites—and led to additional funding and construction industry support for continued research.

Other funded studies collected critical data to [prevent respiratory illnesses on construction sites](#)  . Another [project](#)   helped construction workers and employers make safer choices by creating a website focused on selecting effective fall protection options.

Additional information about the Small Study Program can be found below. CPWR continuously accepts applications and provides a maximum of \$30,000 for up to 12 months.

More information is available:

- [Small Study Program](#) 
- [Recent Small Studies](#) 
- [Using CPWR's Small Study Program to Explore Emerging and Persistent Health and Safety Hazards and Innovative Solutions in the Construction Industry](#)

## Highlights

### Recording Available for Protecting the Mental Health of Health Workers Webinar

The [recording is now available](#)  from the November 18, NIOSH hosted webinar "Protecting Health Worker Mental Health: A Call-to-Action." The webinar was held to raise awareness about mental health among the health workforce. It included presentations from the US Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, Dr. Lotte Dyrbye from the Mayo Clinic, and Elizabeth Royal from the Service Employees International Union. NIOSH Director, Dr. John Howard also presented on new NIOSH efforts and NIOSH researcher Dr. Tom Cunningham moderated discussions around current challenges, promising practices, and next steps to address working conditions to safeguard the mental health of health workers.

### Join Us for the Final NIOSH 50th Anniversary Webinar!

[Register](#)  to attend the last NIOSH 50th anniversary webinar on "Spotlight on Intervention and Translational Research." This event occurs on December 7, 1:00–2:30 p.m. (ET). Presentations will focus on the following topics:

- Translational science at NIOSH.
- Development of the continuous personal dust monitor.
- Highlights from a communication campaign to increase use of personal flotation devices in commercial fishing.
- Intervention research to decrease the effects of respirable crystalline silica in construction.
- Highlights from the 25-year Childhood Agricultural Injury Prevention Initiative at the NIOSH funded National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Safety and Health—one of 11 [Ag Centers](#).

For more information on activities recognizing NIOSH's anniversary, see the [NIOSH 50th webpage](#).

## NIOSH Announces New Awards for the State Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance Program

NIOSH recently [awarded](#) funding to 22 recipients of the State Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance Program. The program's new funding cycle spans from 2021–2026 and supports occupational safety and health surveillance. Through this [funding](#)  NIOSH seeks to strengthen surveillance capacity within states and other jurisdictions, increasing information that will help drive actions that improve the health of U.S. workers. For more information on this program, see the [State Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance Program webpage](#).

## Call for Presentations: Third International Symposium to Advance *Total Worker Health*<sup>®</sup>

You're invited to submit proposals for a variety of sessions and preparatory workshops emphasizing the latest in *Total Worker Health* science and practice. Abstracts for in-person and virtual presentations are welcome. [Submit](#)  your proposals by February 4, 2022.

## Prevent Motor Vehicle Collisions and Injuries Among Officers

Law enforcement officers are at risk of motor vehicle collisions related to many preventable factors. NIOSH published a [fact sheet](#) and [graphics](#) to highlight results from a study evaluating the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's safe driving program. The information also includes recommendations for agencies and safe driving messages for officers.

## Journal Seeks Contributors for Special Issue on Economic and Health Effects of Telework

Researchers are invited to contribute to a special issue of the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (IJERPH). This issue will be dedicated to the topics of economic and health effects of telework. Both theoretical and empirical papers on telework will be considered. NIOSH researchers, Drs. Toni Alterman and Tapas Ray, are serving as guest editors. Learn more on the [IJERPH website](#) .

## New Funding Opportunities

- Three million dollars in funding is now available to support research on improving the occupational safety of workers in the commercial fishing industry and providing critical training for this high-risk occupation. Learn more about the research ([RFA-OH-20-002](#) ) and training ([RFA-OH-20-003](#) ) grant funding opportunities. The deadline to apply for both grants is January 21, 2022.
- NIOSH recently published a [funding opportunity announcement](#)  for the [Education and Research Centers \(ERCs\)](#). NIOSH supports training in occupational safety and health (OSH) through the ERCs. These centers are academic institutions that provide graduate and post-graduate training, research training, continuing education, and outreach in the core OSH disciplines of industrial hygiene, occupational health nursing, occupational medicine, and occupational safety, as well as allied disciplines. The deadline to apply is January 18, 2022.



## Establishing Personal Protective Technology Centers of Excellence to Address Research Gaps

A Federal Register Notice (FRN) was published November 2 regarding the need for NIOSH Personal Protective Technology (PPT) Centers of Excellence. [Feedback](#)  is being solicited on what should be included in the PPT Centers of Excellence. The FRN will be open for comment until the January 31, 2022.

## Funeral Directors: Recording Usual Occupation and Industry on Death Certificates

New information for Funeral Directors was added to [NIOSH's National Occupational Mortality Surveillance \(NOMS\) webpage](#). The content highlights the importance of recording detailed and specific responses for industry and occupation items when completing death certificates. Common errors are addressed and recommendations for collecting useful information are provided.

## NIOSH Study Examines Relationship between Employment Status, Healthcare Access, and Health Outcomes

A [new NIOSH study](#)  found healthcare access and other health-related needs in the United States differ by employment status. Researchers evaluated these needs among people who were employed for wages, self-employed, short-term unemployed (less than a year), long-term unemployed (a year or more), or unable to work. Healthcare access was most problematic among the short-term unemployed. The prevalence of adverse health outcomes increased with length of unemployment status and was highest among respondents unable to work. Read the full [NIOSH Update](#).

## NIOSH Assists OSHA With Technical Manual Update Related to Robotics Safety

OSHA, in collaboration with NIOSH and the Association for Advancing Automation (A3) through an existing [Alliance](#) , developed the updated [OSHA Technical Manual, Section IV, Chapter 4, Industrial Robot Systems and Industrial Robot System](#)

developed the updated [OSHA Technical Manual, Section IV, Chapter 4, Industrial Robot Systems and Industrial Robot System Safety](#). This updated information provides technical information to Compliance Safety and Health Officers and others who may be performing inspections at facilities with robot systems. This chapter is intended as a guide to robot systems found in industrial applications.

## NIOSH Congratulates

### *NIOSH Epidemiologist Selected as a 2021 National Fisherman Highliner Award Winner*

Dr. Jennifer Lincoln recently received the [National Fisherman Highliner Award](#). The award recognizes Dr. Lincoln's exceptional contributions to the fishing industry and to fishing communities. Dr. Lincoln is an injury epidemiologist and currently serves as the associate director for NIOSH's Office of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Safety and Health. Dr. Lincoln and her fellow 2020 and 2021 Highliner award winners were honored at the Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle, Washington, on November 18. Read the [NIOSH update](#) for more information.



### *NIOSH Researcher Receives Prestigious Industrial Hygienist Award*

Dr. Michael Grant recently received the [John J. Bloomfield Award](#) from the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH®). This award is presented each year to a young industrial hygienist who pursues the problem of occupational health hazards primarily by doing fieldwork. Dr. Grant is an Industrial Hygienist in the NIOSH Division of Field Studies and Engineering in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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## Monthly Features

### New Communication Products & Reports

#### FACE Reports

- [A Heavy Equipment Operator Dies When He Was Struck by an Excavator Bucket That Detached From a Quick Coupler—California](#)
- [Town Sanitation Worker Fatally Crushed While Riding on the Riding Step of a Refuse Collection Truck—New York](#)
- [A Pipefitter, Working in a Trench, Died When He Was Struck by an Excavator Bucket That Detached From a Quick Coupler—California](#)

#### Health Hazard Evaluation Report

- [Evaluation of Indoor Environmental Quality and Health Concerns Among Employees of a Public Elementary School](#) 

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## NIOSH Science Blog

Please see the following new blogs. [Sign up](#) to have notifications about new NIOSH Science Blogs delivered directly to your inbox!

- [Bruceton Research Center – Protecting Workers for 110 Years](#)
- [Researching Risk of Birth Defects Among Pregnant Nail Salon Workers and Hairdressers](#)
- [Extinguishing the Risk of Forever Chemicals: State of the Science to Protect First Responders](#)
- [COPD Awareness](#)
- [Health Hazard Evaluation Program](#)
- [Students' Contributions to Wikipedia: Making It Easier for Everyone to Find, Understand, and Use Health Information](#)
- [NOIRS](#)
- [The OSH Act—A Response to Workplace Tragedies](#)
- [Evolution of the NIOSH Logo](#)

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## Federal Register Notice

### Mine Safety and Health Research Advisory Committee (MSHRAC) Meeting

The [notice](#) was posted on October 13. The meeting will be held on December 8–9.

### The Need to Establish Personal Protective Technology Centers of Excellence to Address Research and Practice Gaps

The [notice](#) was posted on November 2. Comments must be received by January 31, 2022.

### Interventions to Prevent Work-related Stress and Support Health Worker Mental Health: Request for Information

The [notice](#) was posted on September 27. Comments must be received by January 25, 2022.

## NORA

### In Case You Missed It: NORA Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Webinar Recording Available

The [recording](#) from the Public Safety Sector Council webinar titled “State of Research and Practice for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)” is now available. It features presentations from a diverse group of researchers, collaborators, and partners around PFAS in the public safety sector.

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## News from Our Partners

### New Report on Opioid Overdoses by Industry and Occupation in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Occupational Health Surveillance Program recently released a [report](#) titled *Opioid-related Overdose Deaths in Massachusetts by Industry and Occupation, 2016–2017*. The new report found that the average annual rate of deaths among workers nearly doubled over the period studied and that some industries and occupations saw a greater increase. The report also focused on trends over time of opioid-related overdose deaths with specific drugs present at death among select occupations. Additional new data are presented that examines these fatality trends by race/ethnic groups.

### Publication Focuses on Environmental Issue and Provides Recommendations for Regulatory Framework

An emerging environmental issue is per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are chemicals that have difficulty decaying or breaking down. Researchers at Tulane University, funded through a [NIOSH Training Project Grant](#), focused on this topic in an article published in the [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#). PFAS exist everywhere and people come in contact with PFAS in both non-work and work settings—this is particularly the case for firefighters and workers in manufacturing. However, no federal regulations or standards currently exist for these chemicals.

### Brief Updates From NIOSH-Supported Centers

Updates from the [Centers for Agricultural Safety and Health \(Ag Centers\)](#):

- [Compensation Incentives and Heat Exposure Affect Farm Worker Effort](#)
- [University of Nebraska Medical Center \(UNMC\) Receives \\$1.7 Million NIOSH Grant to Study Ways to Negate Lung Injury From Biohazards](#)
- The [Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health](#) recently launched a new podcast called “FarmSafe.” During each episode, agricultural workers and public health experts share first-hand stories, recommendations, and resources for preventing injuries and illnesses on the farm. Find episodes and join in on the conversation on the [podcast webpage](#) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Updates from the [Centers of Excellence for Total Worker Health](#):

- [Latest Newsletter From Center for Health, Work and Environment](#)
- [Improving the Conditions of Work for Vulnerable Populations news story](#)
- [Gig Workers’ Health Studied by New California Labor Laboratory news story](#)
- A new training is available on how to engage small groups of employees in improving health and well-being at work. This [10-hour course](#), from the Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW), focuses on

implementing CPH-NEW's Healthy Workplace Participatory Program that focuses on how to effectively involve workers on design teams that focus on enhancing safety, health, and well-being within the workplace.

### **New OSHA Resources for Holiday Workplace Safety**

OSHA has released new [resources](#)  to help keep employees safe during the holiday shopping season. Included are tips to recognize and prevent job hazards and incorporate safe work practices to prevent coronavirus spread. Resources include recommendations on workplace violence, a pocket guide on worker-safety in warehousing, and a fact sheet on crowd management.

### **Call for Abstracts: USF Social Marketing Conference**

The University of South Florida (USF) Social Marketing Conference is seeking abstracts for podium and poster presentations. The abstracts should demonstrate original work that integrates marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors benefiting individuals and communities for the greater social good. The deadline for submission is January 15, 2022. Visit the [conference webpage](#)  to learn more about the conference and find submission instructions.

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## Conferences, Meetings, Webinars, & Events

This page provides a list of publicly available occupational safety and health-related [conferences, meetings, webinars, and events](#) sponsored by NIOSH as well as other government agencies, and nongovernment agencies, such as universities, professional societies, and organizations.

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